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ABSTRACT

A study examined how two third-grade bilingual (Mexican-American) students resisted, appropriated, and/or internalized a whole language curriculum and the relationship between student interaction with and response to the whole language curriculum and their literacy development. Participant-observer ethnographic field notes recorded over an entire academic year were supplemented with data (collected at the beginning and end of the school year) from students' oral reading of several stories appropriate to their reading ability, students' stories about a frightening experience, and the results of students' spelling 57 randomly selected words from the third-grade speller. Results indicated that: (1) 84% of Jose's interactions with the curriculum were as intended by the teacher while Angie engaged with the curriculum 56% of the time; (2) Jose appeared to be able to put his own beliefs about the reading and writing processes "on hold" as he interacted with various literacy activities, while Angie had great difficulty "buying into" the whole language curriculum; (3) Angie was also blocked by her concerns for conventions; (4) Jose increased by 18% his ability to produce sentences that were syntactically acceptable and meaningful, while Angie increased by only 2%; and (5) writing development showed a similar pattern. Findings suggest that the lack of Angie's growth in her ability to construct meaning through written language appears to be related to her resistance to a curriculum that conflicted with her own beliefs about literacy and learning. Eight tables of data are included. Contains 18 references. (RS)

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CHANGE AND RESISTANCE IN A BILINGUAL WHOLE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Stephen B. Kucer

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CHANGE AND RESISTANCE IN A BILINGUAL WHOLE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Stephen B. Kucer

During the last several years, as increasing numbers of researchers and teachers have become familiar with the whole language paradigm for literacy teaching and learning, the debate over the most appropriate way to introduce students to literacy has intensified (e.g. Adams, 1990; Goodman, 1993; Pearson, 1989; Smith, 1994; Stahl & Miller, 1989). Researchers and practioners have argued the issue in books and journals. Speakers at conference point-counterpoint sessions have confronted one another over how students most effectively learn to "crack the code." And, school districts have struggled to define how literacy is to be taught and assessed within their schools. Not surprisingly, participants in all of these arenas have cited comparative data to substantiate their claims.

The comparative data brought to the debate, however, have been largely "assessment scores." Literacy growth as measured by numbers on standardized tests, miscue analyses, wholistic and analytic writing samples, and spelling tests represent much of the data that is at the center of the debate. Students are represented in these scores as means and deviations from the means are frequently not addresssed. It should be acknowledged, however, that this tendency to priviledge the means is a common practice in educational research and is certainly not unique to those involved in the debate over effective literacy practices.

Given this tendency to represent student literacy growth through the use of means, it would be helpful to understand how individual students respond to various literacy methodologies. In particular, it would be helpful to understand how students interact with literacy curricula that contradicts their previous instructional experiences. For students

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encountering whole language curricula for the first time, this contradiction between past and present certainly must produce dissonance for particular students. How students deal with this dissonance through adaptation or resistance can help us to move beyond the numerical means and inform us as to the ongoing impact of the literacy curriculum on individual students.

This article examines the responses of two third grade bilingual (Spanish and English) case study students to a whole language curriculum. Specifically, the research focuses on: 1) how the students resisted, appropriated, and/or internalized a curriculum that conflicted with their past instructional experiences and current literacy belief systems and 2) the relationship between student interaction with and responses to the whole language curriculum and their literacy development.

The Setting

Students. The research was conducted in a third-grade classroom in a large metroplitian area. The students in the class were Mexican-American, bilingual, and from working-class homes. Linguistically, most of the children entered kindergarten speaking predominantly Spanish and were in Spanish literacy programs through the second grade. In the third grade, the students were formally transitioned into English literacy and integrated with the monolingual English students in all subjects except language arts. During language arts, all third grade students in the school were grouped by ability. One teacher had the most proficient monolingual English speaking students and a second teacher had the average monolingual English speaking students. A third teacher, Cecilia Silva, had the bilingual students who were to be transitioned into English literacy. The few monolingual English speaking students who were reading one or more levels below grade were taught

by the school's reading specialist.

Based on informal discussions with the first and second teachers and the principal, and an examination of curricular materials, it appears that the Spanish literacy programs experienced by the bilingual children in the first and second grade were fairly traditional in nature. To a large extent, a basal reader, speller, and grammar book "framed" the instruction. Sound-symbol correspondences and vocabulary were explicitly taught in an isolated manner as were spelling words and punctuation, capitalization, and penmanship. There was little evidence to suggest that the students had encountered such instructional strategies as reader response groups or the use of contextual clues to understand unknown words before entering third grade. In addition, the students lacked experience with writing as a process, i.e. the use of writing and editing conferences to move a written piece of discourse from a rough draft to a final publication.

Six students were initially selected from the class for case studies. These students were chosen because they were highly verbal, were comfortable interacting with me, and represented the range of reading, writing, and spelling abilities and behaviors within the class: above average, average, and below average. During the first month of observations, the contrasting literacy behaviors of the two average case study students, Jose Antonio and Angie, became particularly noteable. Jose Antonio represented the case study student who appeared to "buy into" the curriculum the most. Angie, on the other hand, represented the case study student who appeared to resist this new curriculum the most. Because of these contrasting behaviors, Jose Antonio and Angie received special attention from the researcher and are the focus of the research being reported.

Teacher. The teacher, Cecilia Silva, was originally from Colombia, was

bilingual and biliterate in Spanish and English, and from a middle-class background. For eleven years she had taught elementary school, primarily in bilingual settings. At the time of the study, Cecilia was finishing her Ph.D. in a whole language oriented language and literacy program at a local university. The teacher defined herself as a whole language advocate and was opposed to the teaching of any skills in isolation. She felt that reading and writing strategies were best taught within contextualized situations and believed that the use of thematic units provided such a context.

Based on her previous experiences with transitional students and an informal assessments of the students' English literacy behaviors--oral readings, written stories, spelling samples, observations of the students as they read and wrote--the teacher believed that the students were overly concerned with language conventions and resisted taking risks when engaged in English reading and writing. Therefore, Cecilia stated that her primary curricular goal was to develop a literacy program that would encourage students to actively engage and interact with print and to develop a range of strategies for constructing meanings via written discourse.

Researcher. For one academic year, I was a participant observer in an ethnographic study of a third grade transitional whole language classroom located in a large metropolitan area (Kucer, 1990). One dimension of the study was to examine the individual responses of six case study students to the whole language curriculum. I was in the classroom on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday mornings during the entire language arts period. As a participant observer, I watched and talked with the students as they went about their daily literacy activities and recorded field notes. At no time during the year, however, did I engage in any direct instruction of the children.

Although I interacted with all of the children in the classroom, the majority of my interactions were with the six case study students, with a primary focus on Jose Antonio and Angie. My chair was situated near their desks--the case study students were grouped together--which allowed me to easily observe and talk with them about the tasks in which they were engaged.

Literacy Curriculum. The transition whole language program was intended to provide a supportive instructional environment as the children moved into English literacy. An indicated in Table 1, the teacher developed a literacy curriculum for the students that consisted of four components: themes, teacher reading, free reading, and free writing. The themes engaged the children in integrated activities related to a particular topic under study, such as "Getting to Know About You, Me, and Others" and "Getting to Know About Amphibians and Reptiles." The activities were designed to help students develop conceptual knowledge about the topic and to promote literacy development. Lessons involved art, music, math as well as oral and written language. Materials came from the sciences, social sciences, and literature and represented a range of discourse types (narrative, expository, poetic, dramatic) and resources (books, magazines, filmstrips, records, movies). When available, materials in both English and Spanish were included in the curriculum. Basal readers, spellers, grammar books, and other types of textbook materials were absent from the curriculum.

Table 1 about here.

Embedded within the thematic units were a number of learning events that tended to get repeated throughout the year, regardless of the theme under study. On a regular basis, students experienced paired reading, reader

response groups, compare/contrast activities, expert groups, learning logs, writing conferences, modified cloze procedures, and strategy wall charts. Table 1 describes the characteristics of each of these activities.

In terms of time and emphasis, the strategy wall charts played a particularly significant role in the curriculum. As previously noted, based on her informal literacy assessments and ongoing interactions with the students, Cecilia believed that the students needed to develop a wider range of strategies so as to increase their effectiveness as users of written language. She wanted the students to learn a variety of ways to overcome what I have come to call "blocks to meaning" when they read and wrote (Kucer, 1993). Blocks are those things encountered by the students that halted their ongoing generation of meaning. For these students, blocks typically were encounters with: 1) "something" not recognized, known, or understood during reading, 2) difficulty "getting into" or engaging deeply with what was being read, 3) not knowing what to write next or how to express an idea within a piece of writing, and 4) difficulty spelling a word during writing.

The teacher utilized a number of activities to help students to effectively work their way through these four types of blocks: predictable books, paired reading, reader response groups, modified cloze procedures, and writing conferences. In addition, the teacher developed, in collaboration with the students, a series of strategy wall charts. Each chart had a heading related to one of the four blocks frequently experienced by the students. The wall charts were introduced to the students over a two month period, with Cecilia beginning the introduction of each chart by asking, "What can you do when.....?" and recording student responses. For example, students were asked what they could do when they encountered "something" they did not know or understand during reading. Students brainstormed various

strategies and the teacher listed these on the corresponding chart, including at times strategies of her own. Throughout the year, these charts were reviewed with the students and new strategies added. Eventually, the teacher typed the problems and solutions on 8 1/2" by 11" paper and gave a copy to each student for easy reference. Students were encouraged to use these charts when reading and writing within the theme as well as when engaged in free reading and writing. Table 2 illustrates how the charts appeared at the end of the academic year.

Table 2 about here.

Cecilia referred to the charts in a variety of instructional contexts when students encountered blocks to their reading and writing. In particular, the strategy charts were utilized during reader response groups and writing conferences. As indicated in Table 1, during reader response groups, students discussed things they had difficulty understanding and possible solutions. As each problem was shared, the teacher and the students in the group discussed and "tried out" various solutions to the problem. These solutions were taken from the existing strategy wall charts or new solutions were developed which were later added to the charts. When the problem was an unknown word, for instance, Cecilia and the students might reread the previous paragraph, read the paragraph following the unknown word, and discuss the relative importance of knowing the word's meaning. Although "sounding it out" was on the strategy wall chart and frequently used by the students, Cecilia encouraged the children to develop the use of contextual clues as well. If, during a writing conference, a student was having difficulty finding the appropriate language for expressing a particular idea,

Cecilia and the students brainstormed various ways in which the idea might be expressed and discussed which way was most appropriate. Regardless of what the problem happened to be, Cecilia would "walk the students through" various solutions.

The second curricular component was teacher reading. During teacher reading, Cecilia read aloud short stories, trade books, and articles related to the theme. As she read, Cecilia frequently responded to what she was reading and encouraged the children to do so as well. On occasion, Cecilia would also share with the children her particular reading behaviors. For instance, if she read a sentence that did not make sense to her, she would reread the sentence and discuss with the children why she had done so. Or, if she changed words in the text as she read, but had maintained the author's meaning, she would highlight this behavior, noting that this is something good readers frequently do.

Following teacher reading, students engaged in free reading. Throughout the room were plastic tubs of paperback books and magazines on different topics, representing various discourse modes, and written in English and Spanish. The children selected their own reading material and were provided opportunities to share what they were reading. Although the children were never assigned book reports or any such activities to demonstrate that in fact particular materials had been read, a daily log was kept in which they recorded what had been read and the number of pages.

Free writing, in contrast to theme writing which focused on the topic under study, required students to select their own topics and to determine which texts to publish. Text to be published, whether written during free writing or as part of a thematic unit, involved the children in at least one conference. Conferences usually focused on the ideas in the text; in small

groups the students and teacher discussed what they had learned from the piece, its strengths and weaknesses, and what ideas were in need of further development. On occassion, after revisions had been made following the initial conference, an editing conference would occur. Students and the teacher would revise such surface level errors as punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. However, given the reluctance of the students to risk making mistakes in their writing, the teacher served as the primary agent in the correction of surface level violations before texts were published. Following the editing, the teacher would either type the stories or have the students recopy them. The stories were then illustrated, front and back covers made, and bound. After students shared their published texts with the class, the books were placed in a plastic tub and were available during free reading.

Data Collection

As a participant observer, I recorded ethnographic field notes during every classroom visit, held discussions with the teacher concerning the purpose behind the various instructional activities, and collected all student written work. After field notes had been hand recorded, they were expanded and more fully developed into a narrative on the computer. These expansions occurred on the same day of the classroom visit so that the observations were still memorable.

In addition to the ethnographic field notes, at the beginning and end of the school year, all students in the class were asked to: 1) orally read several stories appropriate to their reading ability, 2) write a story about a frightening experience, and 3) spell 57 words randomly selected from the third grade speller.

Data Analysis

At the end of the academic year, the narratives developed from the field notes were reorganized by case study student. A taxonomy was then inductively developed that examined the students' interactions with, and verbal responses to, the curriculum as reflected in the field notes. Interactions involved an analysis of the student's stance toward the activity in relationship to the activity's intended focus. Interaction behaviors were categorized as engagements, conflicts, and avoidances. Behaviors that indicated an alignment between the student and the activity were categorized as engagements. Behaviors that interfered with the intention of the activity were categorized as conflicts, and student behaviors that avoided the focus of the activity were categorized as avoidance.

For example, during free writing, the teacher wanted the students to select their own writing topics, to use writing to explore their own personal experiences and interests, and to develop fluency. Students were not to concern themselves with such conventions as spelling, punctuation, and capitalization within this activity. Behaviors were categorized as engagements when students selected and wrote about their own topics, focused on the ideas they were attempting to express, and did not indicate a concern for surface conventions. Behaviors were classified as conflicts when students demonstrated concern for surface conventions and were unable to continue writing until each convention was expressed correctly. Essentially, behaviors of this type blocked the student from successfully engaging with the activity. Finally, behaviors were categorized as avoidance when students 1) repeatedly used such predictable patterns as the "lost dog" or the "lost cat" and wrote different versions of the same story, 2) retold stories they

had read or movies they had seen, or 3) refused to write. The critical difference between conflict and avoidance categories is that conflict behaviors reflect the student's attempt to engage in the activity as intended, but being blocked from doing so because of a concern for surface level features. Avoidance behaviors are just that; they reflect the student's attempt to disengage from the activity as intended.

Response behaviors represent the number of times in which the student volunteered verbal responses to general invitations to share or to open-ended questions asked by the teacher during a particular activity. Response behaviors are a subset of the interaction behaviors and indicate the extent to which the student actively participated in teacher led class or group discussions. As indicated in Table 1, students were provided numerous opportunities to respond and share within all components of the curriculum and teacher requests for verbal responses were a common and frequent occurrance within this classroom.

In order to assess the impact of the whole language curriculum on student literacy development, pre and post reading, writing, and spelling assessments were compared. These data were formally analyzed through use of miscue analysis, wholistic and analytic writing measures, and scoring of words spelled conventionally.

Miscue analysis evaluates the degree to which students utilize the interacting semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic systems of language when reading (Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 1987). Each sentence as finally read is judged as to whether or not it is syntactically acceptable and makes sense within the context of the story (language sense). Additionally, each substitution miscue is evaluated as to its similarity in graphics and sound to the target word. Substitution miscues are coded as high in graphic and

sound similarity if two parts of the subsitution look or sound like two parts of the target word (e.g. "always" substituted for "away"), are coded as partial in similarity if one part of the substitution looks or sounds like one part of the target word (e.g. "forest" substituted for "far"), and are coded as low in similarity when no parts of the substitution look or sound like the target word (e.g. "day" substituted for "morning").

Growth in writing was assessed through the development of a four point wholistic rubric (1 low - 4 high) that focused on organization, development, appropriate vocabulary, and well-formed syntactic structures. The pre and post stories were also analytically evaluated for changes in length (number of words and sentences), spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.

As well as evaluating spelling growth in the context of a written story, spelling development was also assessed through a pre and post test of fifty-seven words randomly selected from the third grade speller. As noted previously, the speller was not used in this classroom. As previously noted, the speller was not used in this class. Rather, on occassion during the writing editing conferences, the teacher would have the students identify several unconventional spellings in their own drafts and ask that they be spelled correctly. However, because of the children's general fear of making mistakes when they wrote and their desire to have every word spelled correctly in their drafts, conventional spelling was not emphasized by the teacher in this classroom.

Results and Interpretation

Table 3 illustrates the contrasting stances of Jose Antonio and Angie to the whole language curriculum that was developed from the field notes and taxonomy. For Jose Antonio, eighty-four percent of his interactions with the

curriculum as represented in the field notes were as intended by the teacher. Only nine percent of the time was he unable to successfully engage with classroom activities because of a concern for such surface features as spelling and punctuation. Similarly, only six percent of his interactions avoided the focus of the lessons. In contrast, Angie engaged with the curriculum fifty-six percent of the time, had conflicts twenty-one percent of the time, and avoided the focus of the lessons twenty-three percent of the time.

Table 3 about here.

These percentages, however, fail to capture the day-to-day patterns of behaviors of Jose Antonio and Angie in the classroom. Therefore, in order to give life to these numbers, what follows is a description of behaviors for both students that highlights reoccurring interactions with the curriculum.

Jose Antonio

The most significant factor that appeared to propel Jose Antonio into the curriculum was his ability to put his own beliefs about the reading and writing processes "on hold" as he interacted with various literacy activities. Like all of the students, Jose Antonio entered the third grade with a view of reading and writing as largely acts of "sounding out" and identifying words. In fact, this belief was so strong that in the middle of October, a month and a half into the school year, Jose Antonio asked the teacher when they were going to start "doing reading." Given that the students had been reading trade books for six weeks and had been involved in numerous response groups, Cecilia asked him what he meant. "You know," said Jose Antonio, "when are we going to start doing reading books and work

books." Clearly, Jose Antonio thought he was not being taught how to read in this curriculum.

However, although Jose Antonio thought reading instruction was lacking in this classroom, he put his beliefs aside as he engaged in activities that were intended to help him develop a broader understanding of the reading and writing processes. During writing conferences, Jose Antonio was willing to focus on the meaning of the texts shared and not on spelling and penmanship. He consistently provided feedback to the writers about ideas in their texts that were in conflict, identified gaps that made their texts difficult to understand, and suggested ideas to more fully develop their stories. When students had difficulty knowing where to add new information to their drafts and simply added it to the end, Jose Antonio was the first student in the class to be able to identify more appropriate points in the text to insert the information.

Similarly, during reader response groups, Jose Antonio was able to generate a broad range of meaningful responses to the general questions that framed the discussions. For example, in discussing the book, Reptiles and Amphibians (Sabin, 1985), Jose Antonio shared that he had learned that alligators and crocodiles fight with snakes, eat them, and that he really had enjoyed reading about the fight. He wished, however, that the author would have provided more information about alligator and crocodile babies. In addition, because he wanted to see exactly how alligators and crocodiles were different, Jose Antonio suggested that the author should have provided more detailed pictures of the two reptiles so that they could be more easily compared and contrasted.

One way in which I was privy to the use of various strategies from the reading strategy wall chart were being used by the case study students was

when they were engaged in paired reading. Frequently, Cecilia had the students work in pairs when reading theme books. In paired reading, the students were to chorally read the material and use strategies from the wall chart when they encountered difficulty. This type of setting resulted in a great deal of verbal interaction between the students. When unknown words or ideas were encountered, Jose Antonio learned to put aside the "sounding it out" strategy and read on and then returned after more information had been processed. This read on and return strategy became his strategy of choice and he encouraged his reading partners to do the same when they were unable to sound out a word.

In many respects, what appeared to cause Jose Antonio to suspend his beliefs about reading and writing was a genuine interest in the various themes that were explored within the curriculum. This interest was demonstrated by the intertextual links that he built between the themes and other components in the curriculum, especially free reading and free writing. As previously mentioned, these were times during the day when students selected their own reading materials and writing topics. Frequently, Jose Antonio selected books to read and stories to write that were related to the theme under study. These books and stories, however, were not simply rereadings or retellings of previously encountered materials. Rather, they represented new texts for Jose Antonio. For example, on one occassion Jose Antonio selected the book, William's Doll (1972), to read during free reading. Earlier in the week, this book had been used in the theme, "Getting To Know About You, Me, and Others." The book was one of three from which the students had been asked to select as part of a reader response group; Jose Antonio had choosen another text. The selection of books used in the theme that he had not read or the selection of materials from the book bins that

were thematically related were typical behaviors of Jose Antonio during free reading time.

The thematic curriculum also influenced the topics Jose Antonio chose to write about during free writing time. My field notes indicate a frequent parallel between the theme under study and the topics selected during free writing. This was especially the case with the theme on "Getting To Know About Amphibians and Reptiles." Jose Antonio wrote stories about various types of dinosaurs, about Pauley, a box turtle that became part of the classroom during this unit of study, and about snakes and lizards.

This intertextual linking of the theme with nontheme activities extended to homework and to art activities as well. The school had a policy that homework had to be assigned each day. On alternating days, students in Cecilia's class either had to take a book home to read to their parents or write a story in their writing journals. Jose Antonio would oftentimes select books and writing topics that related to the theme under study. Also, in one corner of the room Cecilia had set up an art center that students were free to use when they had completed particular activities. Jose Antonio frequently chose to draw and paint about things he had read in the theme.

Another interest that appeared to drive Jose Antonio's engagements with the curriculum were holidays and reading materials that I will call "how to books," i.e. books that give directions for how to make or do something. During the weeks immediately preceding Halloween, much of his free writing centered on such topics as the "Haunted House." During free reading, Happy Halloween: Things to Make and Do (Supraner, 1981), became his favorite book.

In a sense, Jose Antonio used free reading and free writing as times to explore topics of interest. Themes that were engaging, favorite holidays, and materials that helped him build or make something all served as avenues

into the reading and writing processes. This is not to say, however, that Jose Antonio's behaviors never conflicted or avoided classroom activities. As indicated in Table 3, nine percent of his responses were conflicts and six percent were avoidances. Although Jose Antonio used his writing journal to explore topics of interest, he also at times appeared to have a rule that each text had to be completed in one day. He and Juan, another case study student, would occassionally compare the number of stories they had written in their journals to see who had written the most. Aware of this developing competition between the two boys, at one point during the first semster Cecilia talked with Jose Antonio and Juan about more fully developing their journal entires and that a story might take several days to write. These talks, however, had little impact on the two boy's behaviors.

In addition, as illustrated in Table 3 by the number of verbal responses voluntered during teacher led class or group discussions, Jose Antonio seldom responded to teacher initiated questions. My fields notes reveal only five such occasions throught the entire year. During these discussions, he appeared to be listening to the talk taking place around him, but chose not to enter into the converstions himself. In other contexts, however, he was quite verbal and would initiate talk with other students.

Angie

Angie, in contrast to Jose Antonio, had great difficulty "buying into" the whole language curriculum. She, like Jose Antonio, entered the classroom with almost an exclusive focus on "sounding out" and word identification during reading and writing. In contrast to Jose Antonio, however, she was frequently unable or unwilling to set aside her beliefs as she interacted with the curriculum.

During writing conferences, Angie was reluctant to accept student

feedback concerning the meanings in her drafts. In one story, "The Lost Puppy," that Angie had worked on for several weeks, a number of students noted that there was nothing about a puppy being lost in what she had written. Cecilia then reminded Angie that the absence of a lost puppy in her story had also been identified as a problem in a previous conference. Angie, although acknowledging the problem, made no attempt to revise her story to include a puppy that was lost.

At one point in the semester, Angie attempted to avoid these writing conferences altogether. The pattern for publication was that students would conference on the meanings in their texts, make revisions, receive editing by the teacher, make editing changes, and then bind their book. Angie, who resisted revisions to meaning, decided that she would publish her stories without first engaging in a conference. During free writing, she simply began to bind selected stories that were in draft form.

Angie sought to avoid taking responsibility for the generation of new meanings in much of her writing and reading. During free writing, she commonly retold fairy tales or movies that she had read or seen, or used the predictable structure, "The Lost _____," and inserted various lost animals. These "lost" stories had little variation and oftentimes repeated what she had written in previous stories, with only a change in the animal that was lost. Cecilia was aware of this tendency early in the semester. In an attempt to help Angie to engage in a more meaningful way, Cecilia would periodically brainstorm with the class possible writing topics and discuss the problem with retelling a story written by another person. Cecilia also discussed with Angie that because most of the students already knew the fairy tales that she was writing, it might be more interesting for the class if she would tell a story of her own. On those occasions when Angie would write a

story that was not a retelling or employed predictable structure, Cecilia took pains to positively respond to the meanings in the story. However, Angie, as was her style, oftentimes ignored these attempts to engage her in writing.

Angie's interest in fairy tales was also evident during free reading. Throughout the year, she would read and reread various fairy tales with which she was familiar. It was not uncommon for the fairy tale being read during free reading to appear in her writing journal during free writing. There was no evidence, however, that she ever expanded her reading of fairy tales beyond those with which she was already familiar.

During reader response groups, Angie also had difficulty moving beyond simple retellings in her responses or repeating what another student had already shared. During the theme, "Getting to Know About You, Me, and Others," the students read the poem, "I Have Feelings, Too." When Cecilia asked the students for responses, Angie volunteered a retelling. During the teacher reading of the Mercer Mayer book, I Was So Mad (1983), Cecilia periodically stopped and asked the students for predictions about what might come next. Invariable, Angie repeated predictions of other students.

What is interesting about Angie, in stark contrast to Jose Antonio, is the degree to which she felt the need or desire to enter into teacher led class or group discussions. As I have already noted, Cecilia's question-asking style was fairly open-ended. During reader response groups, teacher reading, and writing conferences, she tended to ask the questions found on the reader response strategy wall chart. "What did you learn, what did you like and dislike, what did you find confusing, how might the story be improved," were typical teacher questions in this classroom. As indicated in Table 3 in the response column, a simple count of the number of times that

Angie volunteered responses to these questions indicates that she participated far more than Jose Antonio. Once again, Cecilia was not oblivous to these responses and was pleased by Angie's desire to participate. Cecilia encouraged Angie to generate her own responses, to be more specific, and to move beyond retellings. Angie resisted doing so and continued to either repeat what had already been shared or to give general responses such as, "I liked it; it was funny." When asked what she found humorous, Angie would typically shrug her shoulders and offer no response.

Finally, as well as avoiding or resisting the whole language nature of this classroom, Angie also was blocked by her concern for conventions. In her writing, she wanted each word to be spelled correctly as it was written. Suggestions to write it as best you can, to put a line for the word and come back later, or to write what letters you can hear were usually ignored. A neighboring student would have to supply her with the spelling before Angie would continue writing. On one occassion, after a writing conference in which suggestions were made to add particular ideas, Angie decided to recopy the entire story. During this recopying, she changed the surface structure, but added no new ideas. This need to have it correct was also reflected in her reading as well. If she encountered an unknown word and was not able to sound it out, she would ask various students what the word was and resisted using the surrounding context to help her make a prediction.

Perhaps the most telling example of Angie's need to have a clean surface structure was demonstrated when she discovered white out. In January, Cecilia had left several bottles of white out at the writing table that students might use when they were editing their texts for publication. Angie was immediately taken with white out, but used it to meet her own ends. Although intended for editing purposes, in the process of writing her drafts,

Angie would frequently stop and white out her spelling mistakes or letters that she had not formed to her satisfaction. In fact, white out actually appeared to reinforce Angie's concern for the surface structure by making changes in spelling and penmanship easier to accomplish. "Neat and tidy" appeared to be Angie's motto as she painted her way through what she was writing.

This is not to say that Angie was never engaged in the curriculum as intended. Table 3 makes clear that approximately fifty-six of her interactions were as intended by the teacher. However, in a general sense, Angie never appeared to connect with the curriculum and the ideas being explored. Rather, Angie seemed content to interact and respond to many activities in a superficial way. Perhaps Angie felt safe and secure with this level of interaction. One incident in the spring of the year is particularly revealing. A month before a battery of standardized tests were to be administered to all third grade students, the district office sent a series of skill packets to be used to prepare students for the tests. Until that point, the students had experienced no tests or skill sheets in Cecilia's classroom. When the packets were introduced, Angie showed great interest and enthusiatically filled in the blanks and circled the answers. She commented to me that she enjoyed doing this work and engaged in these activities with almost a reckless abandon. Perhaps Angie found these skill sheets so appealing because they represented familiar territory and demanded less of her than did the whole language classroom curriculum.

Student Literacy Development

When comparing growth in reading, writing, and spelling between Jose Antonio and Angie, it is interesting to note the possible impact that their different stances towards the curriculum had on their development. Tables 4

through 8 illustrate the literacy growth of Jose Antonio and Angie as well as the class. In reading, as indicated in Table 4, Jose Antonio increased by 18 percent his ability to produce sentences that were syntactically acceptable and meaningful (language sense) within the story. This increase is close to that of the class mean. Angie, on the other hand, increased by only 2 percent. In the use of graphics and sound, in contrast to both Jose Antonio and the class, Angie appeared to become more rather than less reliant on graphophonics. Her word substitutions, although continuing to violate sentence syntax and meaning almost fifty percent of the time, came to more closely resemble graphophonically the target word. She increased her use of graphics and sound by six percent whereas Jose Antonio decreased his reliance on graphics and sound by one percent and three percent respectively. Given Angie's concern with correct word identification and her resistance to the use of context, this finding is not all that surprising.

Table 4 about here.

Writing development showed a similar pattern. Table 5 indicates student growth in organization, development, vocabulary, and syntax, which was assessed through a four point wholistic rubric. Jose Antonio increased by two steps whereas Angie showed no improvement what so ever and the class showed a gain of .84. Once again, Angie's reluctance to shift her focus from the surface level of the text to ideas and their organization appeared to hamper her literacy development.

Table 5 about here.

Story length, as measured by the number of words, indicates that the story written by Jose Antonio in the spring was forty-six words longer than the story he wrote in the fall. Angie's spring story actually decreased by five words. Angie did, however, improve by twenty-six percent her ability to correctly spell the words she used in her story. This compares to an increase of fifteen percent by Jose Antonio and the class mean which decreased by one percent. Given that correct spelling was a primary concern of Angie's, this increase is not surprising. However, it must also be noted that Angie's story actually decreased in length whereas Jose Antonio's increased significantly. And, by their very nature, longer texts provide the possibility for more misspellings. These results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6 about here.

Table 7 summarizes the growth in story length as measured by the number of sentences as well as the appropriate marking of the beginning and ending of sentences. A sentence was defined as consisting of no more than two independent clauses and their dependents linked by a connective. In story length, Jose Antonio grew by three sentences, Angie showed no increase, and the class as a whole increase by approximately one sentence. However, in another measure of surface structure growth, Angie demonstrated a fifty percent improvement in her ability to conventionally mark sentence boundaries whereas Jose Antonio decreased. It should be noted, however, that a small number of sentences were involved in this analysis and that Angie's improvement in marking sentence boundaries involves a single sentence.

Table 7 about here.

Finally, as shown in Table 8, on the pre and post spelling test, both Jose Antonio and Angie show relatively the same degree of growth and both are above the class mean. This is somewhat surprising, given Angie's concern for spelling and her significant increase in correctly spelling words in her story. Although only speculative, perhaps Jose Antonio, taking the teacher at her word, did not concern himself with spelling words correctly when he wrote stories. However, on the spelling assessment, given its "testing" format, Jose Antonio may have taken correct spelling more seriously.

Table 8 about here.

Students In Conflict: Instructional Responses

As the pre and post literacy assessment make clear, Angie grew little in her ability to construct meaning through written language during the year. This lack of growth appears to be related to Angie's resistance to a curriculum that conflicted with her own beliefs about literacy and learning. Throughout the year, both Cecilia and I were well aware of Angie's resistance, and as I have noted, Cecilia made numerous attempts to help Angie engage more meaningfully with the curriculum.

In Life in a Crowded Place (1992), Ralph Peterson, drawing from the work of Belensky, et al. (1986), discusses learners such as Angie. He suggests that these learners--what Belensky et. al label as receivers of knowledge--are "unable or unwilling to undergo the work and risk that genuine learning requires, they stand ready to learn the right answers that grade

books can record" (p. 123). Receivers of knowledge conceive of themselves as incapable of creating knowledge on their own and look to others for the answers.

In the curriculum experienced by Angie, students were encouraged to construct their own knowledge and attempts to do so were valued by the teacher. Although students were provided various "tools," e.g. strategy wall charts, for the construction of knowledge and provided various instructional settings, e.g. response groups, writing conferences, in which to do the construction, the building of knowledge was ultimately the responsiblity of the students.

It is difficult to know how best to react instructionally to a student such as Angie. In the debate between instructional paradigms, the "Angies" are either ignored or success stories are reported in which reluctant or struggling readers and writers are placed in whole language classrooms and their literacy abilities bloom (Church & Newman, 1985; Mills & Clyde, 1991). However, I believe that the real students "at risk" are the Angies who have difficulty "buying into" the curriculum. Certainly returning Angie to a traditional curriculum cannot be the answer. Such a curriculum would only reinforce Angie's desire to keep learning "neat and tidy." Additionally, such curricula frequently fail to address the very instructional areas in which Angie is in most need; i.e. the use of context when reading, response to written language, and revision in writing.

A partial explanation--and therefore a partial solution as well--for Angie's resistance to the curriculum might be that the teachers she had for other subjects throughout the day promoted, reinforced, and maintained Angie's stance toward learning. These teachers may have had such an impact since their instructional models tended to be aligned with Angie's learning

model. This explanation would suggest that, given more time and experience with process-oriented instruction, Angie would begin to modify her interactions with written language. Additional support for this view can be found in the fact that not only did Angie confront a new instructional paradigm in the third grade, but she also confronted formal English literacy instruction for the first time as well. Perhaps Angie, feeling overwhelmed by the new instruction and new language, was unable to participate in the curriculum in more than superficial ways.

Another possible response, if Jose Antonio is used as the informant, would be to include in the curriculum topics and texts that Angie found engaging. As previously discussed, Jose Antonio's intense interest in curricular topics and materials appeared to have provided him an avenue through which he was able to expand his interactions with written language. Given Angie's love of fairy tales and the security they appeared to provide, such stories might be embedded within the themes and not left for only free reading time. Additionally, the curricular activities that involve the rewriting of existing fairy tales, perhaps from a different point in time or from a different perspective, as found in The True Story of the Three Little Pigs (Screska, 1989), may promote a deeper engagement on Angie's part.

All of these instructional responses, however, fail to address in a direct manner the concerns that Angie as a learner brings to written language. In effect, they are attempts to entice Angie to expand her use of processing strategies through the use of interesting materials and activities. However, a basic tenet of whole language has been respect for the learner. Such respect would suggest that Angie's concern for graphophonics and conventional spellings would need to be honored and accepted. Therefore, rather than attempting to suppress Angie's tendency to

sound out every unknown word or her attempts to spell every word correctly, a more appropriate response might be to engage Angie in activities that focus on these very tendencies.

For example, during reader response groups when the children discuss a word not recognized, rather than beginning with the use of context, for Angie the initial focus would be on graphophonic strategies followed by the use of context. In writing, a customized spelling book might be developed that listed all of the words that Angie typically had difficulty spelling. This resource could then be used during writing whenver Angie felt the need to have things "neat and tidy." And, rather than avoid editing conferences as was done in this classroom, such conferences would become equal partners with conferences that focused on meaning and organization. Student editors might be selected to proofread writing submitted for publication and to help other students conventionalize surface structure errors before publishing occurred. Angie would serve as such an editor.

This is not to say that students such as Angie do not need to learn additional processing strategies. However, if one goal of schooling is to epistemologically empower students--students who sense that they have the ability to construct their own knowledge--as suggested by Oldfather and Dahl (in press), then acceptance of the learner is required. Although seemingly paradoxically, it is through such acceptance that we may discover that change is most effectively promoted.

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Table 1.

Curricular components and typical learning events within the whole language curriculum.

- Teacher Reading: oral reading to the students of theme-related books, stories, and articles. Students are given opportunities to respond to the reading.
- Free Reading: student reading of self-selected books, stories, magazines, etc. Students are given opportunities to share what is read with the class.
- Free Writing: student journal writing on self-selected topics. Periodically, students select a text for conferencing, revising, editing, and publishing.
- Thematic Units:

  Paired Reading: Each student is paired with a partner to read a particular book or story. Only one copy of the text is available to the pair and students are encouraged to read the piece chorally and to support each other's reading as required.

  Reader Response Groups: After selecting and reading a particular text, small groups of students are brought together to discuss what has been read. Discussions focus on: 1) What was the purpose for reading the text? 2) What was learned from reading the text? 3) Why did the author write the text? What was the author trying to teach the reader? 4) What parts were liked best and why? 5) What parts were liked least and why? 6) How was the text similar and dissimilar to other texts that have been read read? 7) What might the author have done to improve the text? 8) What parts/things were difficult to understand? What can be done to understand these parts/things?

  Compare/Contrast Groups: After reading several pieces on the same thematic issue, in small groups students analyze and discuss how the texts are both similar and different.

  Expert Groups: Groups of students identify, investigate, and report on various issues related to the particular theme under study.

  Learning Logs: Students review activities in which they have been engaged during the previous week and record what has been learned from these activities.

  Writing Conferences: In small groups, students share drafts of their writing, receive feedback that focuses on meaning and organization, and revise their texts accordingly. Revised texts are edited, usually by the teacher, and published.

  Modified Cloze Procedure: In small groups, student read theme-related stories in which various words have been deleted. Words are deleted at points in the story in which the context supports meaningful predictions. Students read these stories aloud as well as silently, inserting words in the blanks that make contextual sense.

  Strategy Wall Charts: Reading, response, writing, and spelling strategies that students are encouraged to use when interacting with print.

Table 2. Strategy wall charts.

When reading and you come to "something" that you do not recognize, know, or understand, you can:

1. Stop reading ——> think about it ——> make a guess ——> read on to see if the guess makes sense.
2. Stop reading ——> reread the previous sentence(s) or paragraph(s) ——> make a guess ——> continue reading to see if the guess makes sense.
3. Skip it ——> read on to get more information ——> return and make a guess ——> continue reading to see if the guess makes sense.
4. Skip it ——> read on to see if what you do not understand is important to know ——> return and make a guess if it is important; do not return if it is unimportant.
5. Put something in that makes sense ——> read on to see if it fits with the rest of the text.
6. Stop reading ——> look at the pictures, charts, graphs, etc. ——> make a guess ——> read on to see if the guess makes sense.
7. Sound it out (focus on initial and final letters, consonants, known words within the word, meaningful word parts) ——> read on to see if the guess makes sense.
8. Stop reading ——> talk with a friend about what you do not understand ——> return and continue reading.
9. Stop reading ——> look in a dictionary, encyclopedia, or books related to the topic ——> return and continue reading.
10. Read the text with a friend.
11. Stop reading.

Reading Strategies

When reading and you have a hard time "getting into" or engaging with what you are reading, you can ask yourself:

1. What is my purpose for reading this text?
2. What am I learning from reading this text?
3. Why did the author write this text? What was the author trying to teach me?
4. What parts do I like the best; what parts are my favorite? Why do I like these particular parts?
5. What parts do I like the least? Why do I dislike these parts?
6. Does this text remind me of other texts I have read? How is this text both similar and dissimilar to other texts?
7. What would I change in this text if I had written it? What might the author have done to have made this text better, more understandable, more interesting?
8. Are there things/parts in the text that I am not understanding? What can I do to better understand these things/parts?

Reader Response Strategies

Table 2 (continued). Strategy wall charts.

When writing and you come to a place where you do not know what to write next or have difficulty expressing an idea, you can:

1. Brainstorm possible ideas and jot them down on paper.
2. Reread what you have written so far.
3. Skip to a part that you know what you will write about. Come back to the problem later.
4. Write it as best you can and return later to make it better.
5. Write it several different ways and choose the one that you like the best.
6. Write whatever comes into your mind.
7. Talk about it/ conference with a friend.
8. Read other texts to get some new ideas.
9. Stop writing for a while and come back to it later.

Writing Strategies

When writing and you come to a word that you do not know how to spell, you can:

1. Sound it out.
2. Think of "small words" that are in the word and write these first.
3. Write the word several different ways and choose the one that looks the best.
4. Write the letters that you know are in the word.
5. Make a line for the word.
6. Ask a friend.
7. Look in the dictionary.

Spelling Strategies

Table 3.
Student interaction with the curriculum.

	Percentage of Engagements	Percentage of Conflicts	Percentage of Avoidances	# of Verbal Responses
Jose Antonio:	84	9	6	5
Angie:	56	21	23	32

Table 4.
Reading development in language sense, graphics, and sound.

	Grade Level	Language Sense			Graphic			Sound		
		Pre	Post	Change	Pre	Post	Change	Pre	Post	Change
Class:	2.5	49.27	68.69	19.42	91.71	90.47	-1.24	86.85	83.7	-3.12
Jose Antonio:	1.7	68	86	18	89	88	-1	82	79	-3
Angie:	2.2	50	52	2	81	87	6	75	81	6

Table 5.
Student writing growth in organization, development, vocabulary, and syntax.

	Pretest	Posttest	Change
Class:	1.04	1.88	.84
Jose Antonio:	1.0	3.0	2.0
Angie:	1.0	1.0	0

Table 6.
Story word length and spelling development in written stories.

	Number of Words			Percentage of Words Spelled Correctly		
	Pre	Post	Change	Pre	Post	Change
Class:	35.68	57.37	21.69	88	87	-1
Jose Antonio:	26	72	46	85	100	15
Angie:	26	21	-5	50	76	26

Table 7.
Story sentence length and punctuation development.

	Number of Sentences			Percentage of Sentences Beginning With a Capital			Percentage of Sentences Ending With a Capital		
	Pre	Post	Change	Pre	Post	Change	Pre	Post	Change
Class:	3.26	4.16	.9	56	65	9	50	56	6
Jose Antonio:	2	5	3	100	60	-40	50	0	-50
Angie:	2	2	0	50	100	50	50	100	50

Table 8.
Spelling development as demonstrated on spelling tests.

	Pretest Percentage Correct	Posttest Percentage Correct	Percentage Change
Class:	37	58	21
Jose Antonio:	56	91	35
Angie:	28	60	34